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ABSTRACT

A residential group care facility serving abused children had encountered unprecedented changes both internally and in the community. These changes had been highly stressful for this agency, affecting the morale of those closest to the children, the Child/Youth Care Workers. To address these stressors, a strategy utilizing supportive, growth-oriented supervision was developed so as to: (1) deliver intensive support to Child/Youth Care Workers as growing professionals; (2) support positive adjustment to internal changes; (3) establish a trust-based relationship to agency program management; and (4) increase morale. The central component of the strategy was the development and supervisory support of mutually agreed upon professional growth goals. The application of this supportive supervision resulted in increases in the quality and quantity of communication between child/Youth Care Workers and the supervisor, heightened participation in decision making, greater trust, more appreciation of the individual and the employee, and improved morale. This system of supervision also fostered structure and objectivity in evaluations; professional growth plans were added to permanent personnel records which increased accountability and enhanced the objectivity of performance evaluations. Appendices include a calendar plan for implementation activities and the survey instrument. Contains 12 references. (RJM)

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Building Staff Morale in a Season of Change through Supportive, Growth-Oriented Supervision

by

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Cohort 58

A Practicum Report Presented to the Master's Program in Child Care, Youth Care, and Family Support in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science

NOVA UNIVERSITY

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12/19/94
Date

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Abstract

Building staff morale in a season of change through supportive, growth-oriented supervision. Hickey, Laura M., 1994: Practicum Report, Nova University, Master's Program for Child and Youth Care Administrators. Descriptors: Supervision / Staff Morale / Supportive Supervision / Staff Growth / Staff Satisfaction / Goal Setting.

A residential group care facility serving abused children had entered into an unprecedented season of significant change, both internally and in the external community environment. The impact of multiple changes within a brief period of time had been highly stressful for this agency, most dramatically affecting the morale of those closest to the children, the Child/Youth Care Workers.

The author designed and implemented a strategy utilizing supportive, growth-oriented supervision to (a) deliver intensive support to Child/Youth Care Workers as growing professionals, (b) to support positive adjustment to internal changes, (c) establish a trust-based relationship to agency program management, and, most importantly, (d) increase morale. A primary vehicle of impacting these employees was the development and supervisory support of mutually agreed upon professional growth goals.

This project was favorably received by the Executive Director, Program Director, and Program Management Team of this agency. The nature of this system of supervision added an element of structure and objectivity to the mode of supervision previously utilized. Profession Growth Plans were added to permanent personnel records, both increasing accountability and the focused objectivity of performance evaluation. Training in the development of Professional Growth Plans has been requested to support continued use of this mechanism with program staff.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Setting

The work setting was a residential group care facility with a licensed capacity of 53 children between the ages of 6 and 18. A 90-95 percent occupancy was maintained. Children in care had typically experienced sexual and/or physical abuse, multiple placements, and, therefore, multiple rejections. A number of these children had been admitted directly from placement in psychiatric hospitals and most had received in-patient psychiatric or psychological services with little impact. The therapeutic program in use was Positive Peer Culture with added components to address the specific needs of the sexually-abused child or youth. Cottage peer groups averaged 9 children per cottage unit.

The agency was located in a rural, mountain county of a large southeastern state. Distance from major metropolitan areas was a minimum of one and one-half hours by automobile. Less than 10 percent of the program staff were recruited from the local area.

Requirements for entry-level Child/Youth Care Workers included a high school diploma, valid driver's license, a minimum age of 21 years old. No experience was required; intensive biweekly training was provided in-house in addition to a structured orientation procedure. Less than 30% of Child/Youth Care Workers had a Bachelor's degree.

The staffing pattern for each of the six cottage units was a five-person team of Child/Youth Care Workers. Four Child/Youth Care Workers staffed each cottage in rotating 7-day shifts. One additional Child/Youth Care Worker was assigned responsibility as a Team Coordinator, providing coordinated information and services for each team. Team Coordinators with a Bachelor's degree or a degreed team member provided case management for children in care and their families. Staffing shortages within rotating staff were filled by either the Team Coordinator or a "floating" Child/Youth Care Worker.

This agency was in the midst of a season of significant changes both internally and externally. It had recently faced the resignation of its Program Director, a long-term employee and developer of its therapeutic program. This position, as well as three

management team positions, were filled by internal promotion. Concurrent with these changes in management personnel was a shift from a hierarchical or departmental management model to Teamwork Primacy. An additional factor contributing to staff uncertainty was a radical move by local public schools to exclude children in care from enrollment. The ensuing legal proceedings signalled both a change in the external environment and the possibility of significant internal change as on-campus education requiring staff participation was considered.

Student's Role

The student was one of two Child/Youth Care Supervisors, each serving three cottage units and teams. Formal responsibilities included direct supervision and evaluation of 15 Child/Youth Care Workers in the implementation of therapeutic program intervention. Program services provided a specified daily living milieu for children in care as well as family intervention designed to facilitate clarification of reunification or adoption issues. The student was involved in second-level interviewing of prospective employees and assessment of children for

admission. As a member of a four-person program management team, additional responsibilities included management of program services and formulating recommendations for management and staffing changes to the Program Director.

The student had five years of experience in residential child/youth care with this agency. Three of these years were in direct care as a Child/Youth Care Worker. Additional experience included group leadership for peer sharing groups, case management, and intake services. During this five-year period, this agency had incorporated significant changes in its management style and staffing pattern, resulting in turnover in a large number of staff positions and requiring a high degree of flexibility in long-term staff. Leadership and group dynamics continue to be particular areas of interest and study for this student.

Chapter 2

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Statement

Morale of Child/Youth Care Workers had suffered as a result of major changes in administrative personnel and a significant change in the dynamics and operating model of teams. The agency management team and supervisor had been unsuccessful in providing consistent and adequate support for staff during a period of substantial internal changes and external threats. Behavior of Child/Youth Care Workers, both individually and as teams, indicated a perception of misunderstanding of or indifference to their fears and insecurities as they encountered multiple changes which they had neither participated in nor sought.

Documentation of the problem

Low morale was apparent in the workplace through frequent observation of a number of behaviors and responses of Child/Youth Care Workers. Child/Youth Care Workers assigned as Team Coordinators struggled to accept an equal position with direct care team members

after experiencing a period of increased status. Participation in Team Coordinator meetings was guarded and lacked spontaneity. Voluntary consultation with Supervisors was limited to crisis response with few seeking consultation to maximize on group milieu.

Child/Youth Care Workers were protective of themselves and other team members, many resisting opportunities to give evaluative feedback to other team members in areas of their most critical concern. This sensitivity was equally apparent in response to constructive feedback from Supervisors and other members of the Management Team. There was little open and frank discussion of difficulties in adjusting to a new supervisor or changes in program administration while significant distress was expressed over the safer subject of external factors currently stressing agency functioning.

During the five-month period of internal and external change, 9 Child/Youth Care Workers had resigned, including a staff person assigned as Team Coordinator. An additional Child/Youth Care Worker had entered into a leave of absence. These 10 positions represented a 33% turnover in Child/Youth Care Workers. Staff turnover of this magnitude was indicative of low

morale and organizational commitment among direct care staff.

Resistance to change is documented in literature generated both within the field of human services and business (Long, 1988; Resnick, 1988; Enright, 1984). Studies cite fear and discomfort as common reactions to organizational change (Resnick, 1988). Experience indicates that resistance is created as people encounter change which is mandated or occurs without their participation. Level of trust, a primary indicator of morale in the workplace (Smiar, 1992), is affected as staff lack a voice in decisions. Additionally, involvement in decisions has been found to be a predictor of both organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Krueger et al., 1987).

Analysis of the problem

Agency personnel had faced a series of events, all of which contribute to low morale. Within a five-month period, the following change factors had significantly impacted personnel: 1) resignation of long-term and trusted Program Director, 2) internal promotion of colleagues in the formation of a new management team, 3) replacement of hierarchical or departmental

management model with Teamwork Primacy, 4) a radical move by local public schools to exclude attendance of children in care and subsequent legal proceedings, and 5) consideration of on-campus educational component with significant impact on responsibilities of program staff.

The above changes had followed a period of approximately two years during which one of two Child/Youth Care Supervisor positions was vacant. This vacancy had produced a supervisory response which functioned primarily through crisis-oriented supervisory consultation and required performance evaluations. Both the existing supervisor and Child/Youth Care Workers had suffered the inequities of this deficit. For Child/Youth Care Workers, assignment of an additional Child/Youth Care Supervisor had created opportunity for both positive and negative responses as increased support and accountability had been mutually encountered. For 15 of the 30 Child/Youth Care Workers, this change presented the additional adjustment of encountering a newly-assigned supervisor.

Morale among Child/Youth Care Workers had been affected and reduced as the internal environment of the

agency had undergone significant change. An additional contributor to low morale was the considerable environmental change experienced within the community. Legal proceedings between local public schools and the agency continued to generate publicity and response from the community, both favorable and unfavorable, regarding the agency after almost 80 years of operation in a normally-quiet community. The outcome of these proceedings threatened to significantly impact both the agency and the individual employee.

Factors contributing to low morale have been studied and identified by professionals from the fields of business, human services, and child and youth care. Faltering trust levels are indicated in mixed or conflicted verbal and nonverbal messages as well as indications of declining morale such as absenteeism, reduced enthusiasm/cooperation, complaints, blaming, and other avoidance behaviors (Bartolome, 1989). Multiple changes in a relatively short period of time may produce an overload for both staff and management (Resnick, 1988), a condition increasing the difficulty of positive support for change. Levels of trust exert powerful influence over staff responses to change. While promotion of current staff to fill vacant

positions makes a positive statement regarding advancement and career ladders, it simultaneously creates organizational and personal tensions until equilibrium is restored in these areas (Resnick, 1988).

Issues of trust, uncertainty, and re-alignment had further complicated the natural resistance and reduced morale generated through organizational change which had occurred by mandate rather than involvement in decisions. Nicholas Smiar (1992) describes "a great place to work" as a workplace where the employee experiences trust and value as his/her opinion is sought. In this atmosphere, employees are informed rather than surprised by internal affairs. Communication is open, recognizing the needs of all employees. These factors are positively related to organizational commitment as well as high performance. Lack of trust in the crisis of multiple changes erodes commitment, willingness to positively encounter change, and performance.

A clear pattern emerged as recent staff resignations were analyzed in relation to involvement in decisions and planning. During the transition to a new management team, program director and management system, Child/Youth Care Workers with assigned

responsibility of team coordination were included in limited planning and training for this multi-faceted process. Of the 10 resignations which followed this transition, only 1 was received from a Child/Youth Care Worker with team coordination responsibilities. The remaining 9 resignations were from Child/Youth Care Workers who were recipients of change rather than participants. Stated as percentages of the total number of each position, resignations of Child/Youth Care Workers in direct care positions represented 37.5% while resignations of Child/Youth Care Workers in team coordination represented 16.66%. Workers with no participation in the change process had experienced more than twice the number of resignations within their ranks.

Chapter 3

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal

The goal of this project was to increase morale among Child/Youth Care Workers during an extended period of change and adjustment. The fears and resistance of Child/Youth Care Workers relating to multiple changes would be reduced as benefits of Teamwork Primacy and increased supervision were positively encountered. Trust, as demonstrated through open communication, would alleviate feelings of indifference and misunderstanding. Child/Youth Care Workers would become active participants in the new management systems. Adjustment problems would be transformed into opportunities for growth and development of a supportive supervisory relationship.

Objectives

Within a ten-week period, the student would increase morale among Child/Youth Care Workers through the following objectives:

1. At least 75% of Child/Youth Care Workers will experience qualitative improvement in

communication with the supervisor as evidenced through before/after self-report survey.

2. At least 50% of Child/Youth Care Workers will experience increased recognition of their value to the agency through the development of quarterly professional growth goals corresponding to annual performance or probationary reviews. This increase will be evidenced in a before/after survey.

3. Child/Youth Care Workers will report a 50% increase in participation in team-related decision-making as measured by a before/after survey.

4. At least 30% of Child/Youth Care Workers will report increased levels of trust in the workplace as evidenced through self-reported increases in trust, fairness, and predictability through before/after survey.

Chapter 4

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Review of existing programs, models, and approaches

Morale as a controlling factor in the functioning of an organization had been addressed through literature by business and human service professionals. Creating and maintaining conditions which supported high morale among employees was found as both a strategy and a philosophy of successful supervisors, managers, and organizations. Though programs and models stressed a number of different approaches to building or maintaining morale, a common factor emerged. Professionals found that morale was created, both positive and negative, by the organization as its management and supervisory personnel demonstrated value and caring for each employee (Baldwin, 1992). Employees developed an awareness of themselves in relation to the organization through recognition, appreciation, perceptions of importance within the organization, and a sense of being a valuable and functioning part of the whole organizational endeavor.

Robert Levering (1988, p. xix) identified the essence of a healthy organization, the kind of

organization employees define as "a great place to work". A business and labor journalist, Levering interviewed employees of 125 companies characterized by employees as superior workplaces. Following the psychological approach of learning from the healthy model rather than the unhealthy or conflicted, Levering (1988, p. xii) explored the thriving organization through the eyes of its employees.

Levering (1988, chap. 1) found that such organizations had distinct characteristics which directly and powerfully impacted employee satisfaction and morale. Within these organizations, people had a voice in matters which affected them. Employees had a medium for free discussion and exchange of information, opinions, criticism and ideas. Mechanisms were in place which insured fair treatment and due process. Beyond minimum requirements, employees were free to determine their level of commitment to or involvement with the organization and the staff as a community.

The primary characteristic presented consistently and repeatedly to Levering (1988, p. 23) was the issue of trust. Great workplaces existed in organizations which developed an reciprocal relationship of trust. Employee believed in the organization; the organization

trusted its employees. With trust as the foundational issue, morale, levels of performance, and commitment directly related to the level of trust which had been developed and maintained within the organization.

Fernando Bartolome (1989) from the field of business also addressed trust as a pivotal and fragile issue. Bartolome presented six factors which operated powerfully to either build or destroy trust:

1. The quality, flow, and motivation of communication affected trust. Information flowed both up and down within an organization if that communication was to be valuable and effective. Communication used differientially by managers as a motivator was divisive. Managers communicated with employees as individuals as well as groups or teams.

2. Employees trusted superiors who supported them as people with professional and personal lives, problems, and aspirations. The strength of the professional relationship was determined by the level and integrity of support available from superiors.

3. Respect was an action, not a word. Employees felt respected and empowered by managers who trusted them enough to delegate responsibilities. Respect was demonstrated as employers listened and utilized the

employee's opinions and judgements.

4. Fair treatment of employees was a powerful determinant of trust. Fairness involved recognition, integrity, and impartiality in action.

5. Predictability of employers impacted trust levels. Consistent integrity of employer behavior and standards was essential.

6. Competent superiors demonstrated a level of ability and leadership which inspired employees to trust and follow.

Bartolome (1989) further defined indicators and signals of deteriorating trust, several of which were present in the student's workplace. When trust was jeopardized or destroyed, employees frequently lacked the freedom to state these concerns directly. Reductions in the quantity and quality of information, whether verbal or written, was a clear indicator of distress and often the first signal. Expressions of low morale were manifest in employee behavior such as complaining, blaming, absenteeism, and lack of cooperation or enthusiasm. Verbal communication was strained as employees tested employer openness and attention. A menagerie of nonverbal behaviors indicated changes in attitude and comfort.

A range of management theories varied significantly while all agreed that a connection existed between the behavior of managers and the productivity or effectiveness of the labor force (Smiar, 1992). Within each of these theories, the individual employee was viewed and managed differently. Scientific management assumed the individual employee to be incapable of intelligent thought or efficiency, depending totally on management for instructions on how to do the job right. Theory focusing purely on the social and psychological needs of workers in the workplace created an elite and blameless management group with a pool of employees who were assigned ownership of all the problems. Professional management espoused high value on results activated by objectives and defined performance expectations. Management by excellence presented methods of engineering levels of self-esteem which motivated employees to reach organizational goals. Each of these perspectives focused on the utility of people rather than the value of committed employees.

Recognition of employees with intrinsic value as people with individual needs, strengths, and aspirations influenced management practices in business

and human relations during the last two decades. It was this management philosophy which fit harmoniously and congruently with the mission, philosophy, and nature of the student's agency setting. Whether referred to as human relations management (Baldwin, 1992), managing with compassion (Cole, 1992), commitment-based management (Walton, 1992), the essence of this management trend was that employees did not reach peak performance and satisfaction through control or manipulation. High performance resulted when satisfaction needs and potential were recognized. A sense of ownership was generated as employees were viewed as stakeholders in the success of the organization. The focus of management turned from control to development, empowerment, and facilitation. This model was congruent both in theory and practice with recent changes in the student's organizational setting as well as its long-standing philosophical base. Literature cited this model as particularly suitable to settings utilizing intensive teamwork, problem solving, self-monitoring, and continuing professional growth (Walton, 1992).

Commitment-based management blended well with several operational modes currently found in the field

of child and youth care:

Supportive Supervision. A model of supervision as a major channel of communication and support was utilized by a multi-disciplinary children's mental health center in Canada. Supervision practices were based on the belief that its relationship to the organization was primary as it connected and supported workers throughout an organization (Brillinger, 1990). This approach was based on the premises that 1) supervision was a neccessary and continuing function of organizational structure, 2) employees had performance obligations in regard to both job descriptions and the organizational entity, 3) supportive, constructive supervision was foremost as a determinant of both performance and service, and 4) involvement in decisions occurred naturally within the context of the supervisory relationship.

This system of supervision involved both support for the employee as a valued and respected individual as well as developmental planning to activate expressed value, respect, and responsibility. A dual focus on the person and the professional undergirded the employee's sense of value to the supervisor as the direct link with the philosophy of the organizational.

Emphasis on integrity and mutuality of exchange between the supervisor and the individual employee was found to build a sense of trust, value, and security within an organization. Active participation in planning, goal setting, and evaluating results involved continuing supervision throughout the annual cycle, tying goals for improved performance and professional development to the annual performance review.

A strength of this system was its flexibility in supporting both individuals and teams. As groups of individual staff members, teams were supported, challenged, and developed through the same concept of facilitative supervision applied to the individual employee. Planning, goal setting, problem solving, and evaluation were utilized to communicate value, facilitate growth, and improve performance individually and collectively.

Applying this system to a setting in the early stages of implementing Teamwork Primacy was potentially complex in several areas. Professional goals and aspirations of team members may have become conflicted or competitive without a solid understanding of individual strengths and roles within the team. Understanding the foundational equality of each team

member and role was be essential to successful application. A further caution was noted in avoiding "overreaching" (Walton, 1992). In utilizing facilitative supervision within the context of Teamwork Primacy, careful application was essential to insure that teams and individuals were developmentally prepared to address each new skill area and responsibility without jeopardizing the continuing focus on mastery of program skills.

Quality Leadership. Competence and consistency in supervisory leadership was found to contribute to positive increases in morale. Supervision focused on effective leadership skill rather than the force of organizational authority had overcome both negativity and poor working conditions (Parsons, 1990). Effective leaders were consistently committed to organizational values, operating with self-awareness, integrity, fairness, and open communication to create a milieu of trust and commitment through the staff community.

Parsons (1990) proposed supervision involving both on-line supervision and weekly formal supervisory conferences in conjunction with effective team building skills. Positive team relations presented opportunities for staff to experience a sense of

belonging as well as creating involvement in decisions, both factors related to staff retention. A keen sense of conflict resolution as a process leading to win/win solutions was essential to maintain a sense of belonging and, importantly, a sense of being heard.

A similar concern existed with a focus on leadership rather than traditional management. Awareness was to be maintained to insure that the developmental level of the individual and the team was compatible with the leadership style of the supervisor. While it was important not to rescue individuals and teams from the dilemma inherent in growth, quality of services to children and families were to be maintained.

Proposed solution strategy

The transition to Teamwork Primacy had been underway for five months at the time the solution strategy was developed. Due to the intensity of other change factors which had impinged upon this transition, expediency had frequently compromised the purity of team empowerment. An expressed theme for the management team of this agency focuses intensively on

Teamwork Primacy and the process essential to support, develop, and empower teams and the individuals functioning within them.

The supervisory relationship was used to build trust and morale of Child/Youth Care Workers as they increasingly received individual attention, growth opportunities, and affirmation. Throughout this process, the Supervisor scrupulously monitored interaction to increase individual perception of fairness and predictability. The Supervisor implementing this solution strategy was the student of this proposal. Those directly involved in the implementation of this strategy included the Supervisor and 15 Child/Youth Care Workers. Approval for this project was requested of the agency Program Director and granted without revision.

Implementation of this strategy was facilitated by four recent performance evaluations recommending mutually-supported goals as a growth mechanism. This had been well received by Child/Youth Care Workers, the Program Director, and the Executive Director. Goals established, including time frames and evaluation, were entered into permanent personnel files. Factors which could have potentially impeded implementation included

continuing turnover among Child/Youth Care Workers and scheduling difficulties in relation to both turnover and the addition of on-campus education responsibilities pending for Child/Youth Care staff.

Given the continuing focus on Teamwork Primacy, the solution strategy developed to increase morale provided a balancing support mechanism for the individual Child/Youth Care Worker. The Supervisor was to utilize supportive individual supervision to undergird the value of each Child/Youth Care Worker. Staff employed for more than 12 months were to be engaged in a process of establishing professional growth goals which corresponded to weaker areas of performance and skill as documented in annual performance reviews as well as focusing on individual career paths. For newly-employeed Child/Youth Care Workers, the process of creating goals was to coincide with the established orientation program, focusing on foundational understanding of program philosophy as well as development of basic intervention skills.

The process of establishing and following through on goals was used as a vehicle to deliver support and develop a positive and affirming supervisory relationship with individual Child/Youth Care Workers.

A sense on partnership and mutual support of employee growth and satisfaction was to be cultivated and demonstrated through ongoing individual supervision to activate, monitor, and evaluate progress in meeting established goals. The Supervisor utilized on-site supervision during each shift of duty or work day in addition to weekly meetings with each Child/Youth Care Worker to support and reinforce efforts and the growing relationship. This process was designed to increase both the quality and the quantity of direct communication between individual Child/Youth Care Workers and the Supervisor. Increased participation in decision-making was initiated in selection of goals and supported within the context of the team through the expanding confidence inherent in growth.

Evaluation of the outcome of this project would utilize an employee survey to establish baseline attitudes and perceptions of Child/Youth Care Workers. This survey, included in Appendix A, was designed to assess the existence of the determinants of morale rather than morale as a direct issue. Given the present strains upon this organizational system, care was taken to design an instrument which would allow candid response. It was be presented to Child/Youth

Care Workers, with an explicit statement of anonymity, for completion before and after implementation of the strategy. Change in responses were to be measured against stated objectives.

To create a further source of information, the Supervisor was to maintain a daily log of contacts with each Child/Youth Care Worker including supervisory meetings and on-site visits to document observed quality, length, and frequency. This log provided a vehicle for monitoring contact as well as details of interaction which indicated potential or needed adjustments or adaptations during the course of the implementation phase. A ten-week calendar plan for implementation activities is provided in Appendix A.

Chapter 5

Strategy Employed - Action Taken and Results

Action Taken

A significant delay in implementation was necessitated by the subsequent resignation of 4 additional Child/Youth Care Workers, all of which terminated employment without notice. This created a team shortage for two supervised teams, leaving one team with first one and then two team members. To insure the continuity of care to the children in placement and provide adequate support to these teams, the student focused on providing necessary coverage and relief until these teams could be adequately staffed.

A factor which changed during the delay period was the onset of an on-campus education for children in four of the six cottages. Two of the three teams supervised by the student were affected by this change. While relieving some of the pressures experienced due to the hostile public school environment, the on-campus educational component significantly affected the role of the Child/Youth Care Worker during school hours. It is probable that all teams will work with on-campus education in the near future. In the meantime,

however, daytime responsibilities increased for these Child/Youth Care Workers with no reduction in other expectations.

An additional factor which emerged simultaneously with the implementation of the ten-week solution strategy was a time-limited change in the Program Management Team. A member of this team was temporarily reassigned as a Child/Youth Care Worker with responsibility for team coordination. This change occurred in conjunction with a public statement of alcohol dependency, a condition which had impaired this individual's ability to perform in a management position. While this disclosure and reassignment focused upon responsibility and accountability, there remained an array of conflicting responses among Child/Youth Care Workers. It is fair to state that this incident was damaging to the credibility of all members of the Program Management Team. The student was assigned supervision over this newly-formed and temporary team, none of whom had assigned to this supervisor previously.

Employee Survey

Implementation of the solution strategy was initiated by distribution of an employee survey polling the opinion of Child/Youth Care Workers in the following areas: length of employment, frequency of direct communication between supervisor and Child/Youth Care Worker, initiator of communication, form of communication, quality of communication, delivery of information/plans, participation in decision-making, fairness of policy and standards, relationship with organization and/or staff community, sharing of rewards, value as an employee, value as an individual, and trust level in the workplace. This "before" survey was completed by all members of the three supervised teams of Child/Youth Care Workers, a total of 14 supervisees at that time. Anonymity was assured through multiple-choice responses, absence of supervisor during completion, and identification of team assignment only. This process was repeated in the final stage of the solution strategy as an "after" survey of a total of 12 supervisees. Curiosity, but no significant overt resistance, was encountered during this procedure. Results of these surveys are included in Appendix B.

Individual meetings

Individual meetings were held with 14 Child/Youth Care Workers during the first two weeks of implementation. Each meeting was preceded by a review of the personnel file of each worker with relevant information recorded on the Child/Youth Care Worker Data Sheet included in Appendix C. Individual meetings were utilized to discuss the mode of supervisory support and initiate the development of quarterly professional growth goals. These meetings lasted a minimum of 45 minutes.

Professional Growth Plans

A Professional Growth Plan, as shown in the sample plan of Appendix D, was developed in cooperation with each Child/Youth Care Worker assigned to the student for supervision. Two goals which were common to all Child/Youth Care Workers addressed both personal awareness and a process of increasing team awareness. One or two additional goals were developed through the cooperative efforts of the student and the Child/Youth Care Worker, focusing on areas of weaker performance. At the time of this process, all Child/Youth Care Workers were non-probationary. Weaker areas of

performance were chosen by the individual worker as noted on the most recent performance evaluation.

Some resistance was encountered in developing Professional Growth Plans. This process was allowed a three week period to insure that each worker had a sense of ownership of goals developed. It became apparent that lack of exposure to goal setting accounted for a significant amount of resistance. There also appeared to be strong sensitivity to focus on weaker areas of performance. An extended time period was allowed to provide a foundational perception of support rather than critique. Lack of trust in program administration was evident during this process.

On-site Supervision

On-site supervision was utilized during Week Two through Week Ten to support professional growth goals established. On-duty workers were observed during each shift of residential responsibility at a variety of times and in a number of situations. Feedback on performance was recorded and shared with the observed worker(s). Feedback focused on established goals,

strategic therapeutic intervention, and in-house training received.

While the solution strategy and ten week plan called for feedback to be delivered within 48 hours of on-site supervision, this was exceedingly difficult to accomplish. The student encountered additional demands due to the reassignment of a member of the Program Management Team, as did remaining members of this team. To facilitate feedback within the shortest period of time, responses to observation were most often shared with on-duty staff at the end of the observation time. At times, telephone contact was used when circumstances in cottages disallowed brief consultation.

Review of Actual and Planned Activities

A log or calendar of practicum activities was maintained. This account was compared on a weekly basis with planned intervention to determine needed adjustments. Initial adjustment focused on extending time allocated to development of Professional Growth Plans. Additional adjustments were necessitated by team staffing shortages and alternate work schedules utilized. These changes required an altered pattern of on-site supervision for two teams to accommodate the

differing schedules used during a major portion of the ten week period. A final adjustment was made in presenting the "after" survey for completion. As teams began to encounter information of a pending change in supervisor assignment, Employee Surveys were distributed for completion during Week Nine rather than Week Ten as planned to prevent skewing of results.

Results

Achievement of the objectives of this project was measured through before/after self report surveys. Results of this survey are included in Appendix D. Specific movement toward achieving stated objectives is as follows:

1. **Qualitative improvement in communication with the supervisor by at least 75% of Child/Youth Care Workers**

Items 2 and 3 of the Employee Survey report the following increases over initial ratings:

Frequency of direct communication:	+138%
Self-initiated:	+750%
Self/Supervisor initiated:	+ 16%
Verbal & written:	+ 72%

Extremely honest and open:	+ 53%
Moderately honest and open:	+ 17%
Necessary information	+ 8%
Usually necessary information +	+ 83%
Sometimes lack information	- 30%

Significant increases were reported in most area relating to communication. Over the nine areas addressed, the percentage of increase over initial responses averaged 129%.

2. Increased recognition of value to agency through development of quarterly professional growth goals by at least 50% of Child/Youth Care Workers.

Quarterly professional growth goals were developed for 100% of these workers. Child/Youth Care Workers reported a decrease from 50% to 42% who feel valued as a responsible worker, a 16% decrease over initial ratings. Value as an individual similarly decreased from 36% to 34%, a 5% decrease over initial ratings. In both areas, 58% of the Child/Youth Care Workers reported inconsistency in their value as employees and individuals. This appears to contradict dramatic increases in self-initiated communication with

supervisor and substantial increases in honest and open communication with supervisor.

3. Report by Child/Youth Care Workers of at least a 50% increase in participation in team-related decision-making.

Experience in equal participation in team-related decision making was reported to have increased from 38% to 75%, an increase of 97% over initial ratings.

4. Increased levels of trust in the workplace through self-reported increases in trust, fairness, and predictability as reported by at least 30% of Child/Youth Care Workers.

While no Child/Youth Care Workers reported high levels of trust in the workplace, reports of moderate level of trust increased from 36% to 50%, a 38% increase over initial ratings. In the "after" survey, it is significant to note that there were no responses indicating a high level of trust; responses were split evenly between moderate and low levels of trust, a 7% increase over initial ratings for low level of trust. There appears to be a contrast between trust in the workplace and communication with the

supervisor where extremely honest/open was reported by 66% of workers.

Fairness and predictability increased from 43% reporting consistently fair and predictable to 59%, a 16% increase over initial ratings. Responses, both "before" and "after" indicate at least 50% of Child/Youth Care Workers believe that policy and standards vary or are not consistent.

Significant progress was made in several areas toward the overall goal of increasing morale among Child/Youth Care Workers. Trust, as demonstrated through open communication, increased dramatically. Child/Youth Care Workers reported increased active participation in decision-making. The student experienced diminishing resistance to on-site supervision and the inherent increase in accountability.

A puzzling accompaniment to the progress experienced and reported was a reported decrease in the perceived value, both as an employee and as an individual. Several factors may account for this perception. First, this project was undertaken with three of six cottage teams. For the three teams

affected, increases in supervision brought gains in being more thoroughly informed, an increased sense of the accessibility of the supervisor to all team members and the empowerment of participation in decision-making. However, on-site supervision and the development of professional growth goals placed increased responsibility and accountability roles on Child/Youth Care Workers affected by this project. Empowerment is generally a positive experience; increased responsibility and accountability often require an extended growth process during which some painful realities may surface.

Second, one of the three teams involved in this practicum project could be described as acquired by "hostile takeover". This team was disrupted by the reassignment of a former management team member who was reassigned to a less stressful position. Were the student a member of that team, it would require a lengthy process to determine if the reassigned team member were treated deferentially by the newly-assigned supervisor.

Third, the process of encouraging open and honest communication gave birth to a number of test opportunities. Factors which surfaced repeatedly were

the belief of unmerited political power wielded by some and the possibility of relational power by others. As an agency which grew from a model utilizing husband/wife teams in cottages, this agency now has several spouses involved on a management level. No doubt this question will linger. While some may express genuine concern, displacement or blaming, will continue to be a factor to consider.

Fourth, a transition appears to be occurring regarding relationship to the staff as a group or community. Initially, 50% of Child/Youth Care Workers responded that they were comfortable without strong ties to the staff group. An additional 22% believed they were pressured to form relationship which exceeded the requirements of employment. In the "after" survey, 75% of Child/Youth Care Workers reported comfort without strong ties, a 50% increase in this area. Only 8% reported pressure to form relationships as compared to an initial rating of 22%, a 64% decrease over the period of the project.

Since freedom to determine the level of commitment or involvement with the organization or staff as a community is a characteristic of a superior workplace, the increased freedom or comfort without strong ties to

the staff community is a positive indicator. This shift is accompanied by a 17% increase in ratings on the connection between performance and rewards. In initial ratings, 64% of Child/Youth Care Workers perceived the sharing of rewards not to be clearly tied to performance. Increasingly, performance rather than relationship and other factors are perceived to influence sharing of rewards.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

The application of this supportive supervision strategy has resulted in positive movement in several areas and appears to be fueling a healthy transition in others. Communication between Child/Youth Care Workers and the supervisor has increased in both quantity and quality. Participation in decision-making has dramatically increased. There are indications of a transition in progress regarding trust in the workplace and perceptions of value as an individual as well as an employee.

A review of the results of this project indicates a change in morale. Child/Youth Care Workers are in the process of adjusting to changed roles for themselves and others within the organization. This transition or adjustment process has been supported through the activities of this project. A stronger impact may well have been experienced with application of the project to all teams. A statement of agency-wide consistency, particularly valuable in a season of change, would have been achieved in this manner.

It is the intention of the student to continue to deliver supervisory support as designed for this practicum project. Beyond the benefit to the individual employee, this supervisor has gained extensively in understanding the realities of program application within cottage units as well as a clearer perception of the training and developmental needs of staff supervised. Continued supervision in this manner has been requested by the agency Program Director. The development of Professional Growth Plans for Child/Youth Care Workers has received strong support from both the Executive Director and the Program Director. It has been requested that the rationale and development of these individual plans be presented to the staff group as a focused training to facilitate use of this growth mechanism with remaining program staff.

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APPENDIX A

Calendar plan for implementation activities

Calendar plan for implementation activities

Week One

1. Distribute Employee Survey to 15 Child/Youth Care Workers for completion within 24 hours. Review responses. Approximate time required: 6 hours
2. Meet individually with 4 Child/Youth Care Workers with recent performance evaluations to develop establish 3-4 goals for professional growth during the quarter. Discuss mode of supervisory support, i.e. supervisory meetings, on-site supervision, ongoing telephone consultation. Approximate time required: 4 hours
3. Review progress of 7 new employees on orientation program. Approximate time required: 2 hours
4. Meet individually with 4 new employees to develop goals for completion of orientation program within probationary period. Discuss mode of supervisory support. Approximate time required: 4 hours
5. Review log of actual intervention against plan to determine any needed adjustments. Approximate time required: 1 hour

Week Two

1. Review most recent performance evaluations of 4 remaining non-probationary Child/Youth Care Workers. Meet individually with each employee to develop establish 3-4 goals for professional growth during the quarter. Discuss mode of supervisory support, i.e. supervisory meetings, on-site supervision, ongoing telephone consultation. Approximate time required: 8 hours
2. Meet individually with 3 remaining new employees to develop goals for completion of orientation program within probationary period. Discuss mode of supervisory support. Approximate time required: 3 hours
3. Provide on-site supervision for 6 on-duty Child/Youth Care Workers. Schedule and conduct conference within 48 hours to provide feedback in relation to goals. Approximate time required: 15 hours
4. Review log of actual intervention against plan to determine any needed adjustments. Approximate time required: 1 hour

Week Three

1. Provide on-site supervision for 6 on-duty Child/Youth Care Workers. Schedule and conduct conference within 48 hours to provide feedback in relation to goals. Approximate time required: 15 hours
2. Meet individually with 3 Child/Youth Care Workers assigned as Team Coordinators to review pending documentation, coordination issues and progress on goals developed. Approximate time required: 3 hours
3. Review log of actual intervention against plan to determine any needed adjustments. Approximate time required: 1 hour

Week Four

1. Provide on-site supervision for 6 on-duty Child/Youth Care Workers. Schedule and conduct conference within 48 hours to provide feedback in relation to goals. Approximate time required: 15 hours
2. Meet individually with 3 Child/Youth Care Workers assigned as Team Coordinators to review pending documentation, coordination issues and progress on

goals developed. Approximate time required: 3 hours

3. Review log of actual intervention against plan to determine any needed adjustments. Approximate time required: 1 hour

Week Five

1. Provide on-site supervision for 6 on-duty Child/Youth Care Workers. Schedule and conduct conference within 48 hours to provide feedback in relation to goals. Approximate time required: 15 hours
2. Meet individually with 3 Child/Youth Care Workers assigned as Team Coordinators to review pending documentation, coordination issues and progress on goals developed. Approximate time required: 3 hours
3. Review log of actual intervention against plan to determine any needed adjustments. Approximate time required: 1 hour

Week Six

1. Provide on-site supervision for 6 on-duty

Child/Youth Care Workers. Schedule and conduct conference within 48 hours to provide feedback in relation to goals. Approximate time required: 15 hours

2. Meet individually with 3 Child/Youth Care Workers assigned as Team Coordinators to review pending documentation, coordination issues and progress on goals developed. Approximate time required: 3 hours
3. Review log of actual intervention against plan to determine any needed adjustments. Approximate time required: 1 hour

Week Seven

1. Provide on-site supervision for 6 on-duty Child/Youth Care Workers. Schedule and conduct conference within 48 hours to provide feedback in relation to goals. Approximate time required: 15 hours
2. Meet individually with 3 Child/Youth Care Workers assigned as Team Coordinators to review pending documentation, coordination issues and progress on goals developed. Approximate time required: 3 hours

3. Review log of actual intervention against plan to determine any needed adjustments. Approximate time required: 1 hour

Week Eight

1. Provide on-site supervision for 6 on-duty Child/Youth Care Workers. Schedule and conduct conference within 48 hours to provide feedback in relation to goals. Approximate time required: 15 hours
2. Meet individually with 3 Child/Youth Care Workers assigned as Team Coordinators to review pending documentation, coordination issues and progress on goals developed. Approximate time required: 1 hour
3. Review log of actual intervention against plan to determine any needed adjustments. Approximate time required: 1 hour

Week Nine

1. Provide on-site supervision for 6 on-duty Child/Youth Care Workers. Schedule and conduct conference within 48 hours to provide feedback in

relation to goals. Approximate time required: 15 hours

2. Meet individually with 3 Child/Youth Care Workers assigned as Team Coordinators to review pending documentation, coordination issues and progress on goals developed. Approximate time required: 3 hours
3. Review log of actual intervention against plan to determine any needed adjustments. Approximate time required: 1 hour

Week Ten

1. Provide on-site supervision for 6 on-duty Child/Youth Care Workers. Schedule and conduct conference within 48 hours to provide feedback in relation to goals. Approximate time required: 15 hours
2. Meet individually with 3 Child/Youth Care Workers assigned as Team Coordinators to review pending documentation, coordination issues and progress on goals developed. Approximate time required: 3 hours
3. Distribute Employee Survey to 15 Child/Youth Care

Workers for completion within 24 hours. Compare responses to initial survey to determine difference between before and after survey. Review 10-week log against 10-week plan, summarizing contact by employee, type of contact, and progress on goals.

Approximate time required: 6 hours

APPENDIX B

Results of Employee Survey

EMPLOYEE SURVEY

Results: Before and After Implementation of Solution Strategy
(Before/after: percentage of total employees, total employees per response and number of new [less than 12 months] employees per response. Change: percentage of change [increase/decrease] over initial responses.)

	BEFORE % (Total/New)	AFTER % (Total/New)	CHANGE % (+/-)
1. Length of employment:			
Less than 12 months	28% (4/4)	25% (3/3)	
More than 12 months	72% (10/10)	75% (9/9)	
2. Communication:			
Direct Communication:			
Frequently	21% (3/0)	50% (6/0)	+138%
Moderately	50% (7/2)	50% (6/3)	
Seldom	29% (4/2)		
Communication Initiated:			
Self	2% (3/2)	17% (2/0)	+750%
Supervisor	7% (1/0)		
Self and supervisor	71% (10/2)	83% (10/3)	+ 16%
Form of Communication:			
Primarily verbal	64% (9/3)	50% (6/1)	- 22%
Primarily written	7% (1/0)		
Both verbal & written	29% (4/1)	50% (6/2)	+ 72%

	BEFORE % (Total/New)	AFTER % (Total/New)	CHANGE % (+/-)
Quality of Communication:			
Extremely honest/open	43% (6/1)	66% (8/3)	+ 53%
Moderately honest/open	29% (4/2)	34% (4/0)	+ 17%
*Between moderately honest and somewhat guarded	7% (1/0)		
Somewhat guarded and cautious	21% (3/1)		
Extremely guarded and cautious			
*(Write-in response)			
3. Information/Plans*:			
Necessary information promptly/thoughtfully		8% (1/0)	
Usually necessary information	36% (5/1)	66% (8/3)	+ 83%
Sometimes lack	36% (5/1)	25% (3/0)	- 30%
Often do not receive in timely manner.	22% (3/1)		
(*One "after" survey with no response)			
4. Participation in Decision-making:			
Participate equally with team members	38% (6*/0)	75% (9/2)	+ 97
Supv. + Mgt. Team + team	19% (3/3)	8.3% (1/1)	- 56%
Supv. + Mgt. Team +/- team	31% (5*/0)	8.3% (1/0)	- 73%
Input seldom	6% (1/1)	8.3% (1/0)	+ 38%

	BEFORE % (Total/New)	AFTER % (Total/New)	CHANGE % (+/-)
5. Fairness of policy/standards:			
Consistently fair/ predictable	43% (6/2)	50% (6/1)	+ 16%
Usually not treated fairly.			
Vary or not consistent	57% (8/2)	50% (6/2)	- 12%
6. Relationship:			
Close relationship/ strong loyalty	21% (3/2)	17% (2/1)	- 19%
Comfortable without strong ties	50% (7/1)	75% (9/2)	+ 50%
*Sometimes feel pressured	7% (1/0)		
Pressured to form relationship exceeding requirements	22% (3/1)	8% (1/0)	- 64%
*(Write-in response)			
7. Sharing of rewards:			
Clear connection between performance and rewards	36% (5/2)	42% (5/2)	+ 17%
Not clearly tied to performance	64% (9/1)	58% (7/1)	- 9%

	BEFORE % (Total/New)	AFTER % (Total/New)	CHANGE % (+/-)
8. Value as an employee:			
Valued as responsible worker	50% (7/3)	42% (5/3)	- 16%
Value/recognition inconsistent	50% (7/1)	58% (7/0)	+ 16%
Not feel valued			
9. Value as an individual:			
Respected and valued	36% (5/3)	34% (4/3)	- 5%
Respect and value inconsistent	64% (9/1)	58% (7/0)	- 9%
Not valued/respected		8% (1/0)	
10. Trust level in workplace:			
High level of trust	7% (1/1)		
Moderate trust	36% (5/1)	50% (6/3)	+ 38%
Moderate/low trust	14% (2/1)		
Low trust	43% (6/1)	50% (6/0)	+ 16%
*(Write-in response)			

Appendix C

Child/Youth Care Worker - Data Sheet

CHILD/YOUTH CARE WORKER - DATA SHEET

Name:

Age:

Education:

SRI: CCW
HR

Date of Hire:

Last Evaluation:

CYCW: I
II
III
TC

Team Assignment:

Other:

updated:

Appendix D

Sample Professional Growth Plan

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH PLAN

NAME: (Sample)

POSITION: Child/Youth Care Worker I

PERIOD COVERED: 03-15-94 to 06-15-94

SUPERVISOR: Laura Hickey

The following professional growth goals have been mutually-developed to facilitate increased understanding and proficiency in performance of assigned responsibilities. Goals relate directly to the employee Performance Evaluation dated 02-01-94.

FOCUS AREA #1: Key Result Area 4 - Integration Work

GOAL: To gain an understanding of staff recruitment which will enable the full team to participate knowledgeably in interviewing prospective Child/Youth Care Workers.

Objective: To gain an understanding of the responsibilities of team members in the interview process.

Indicator: Review criteria for team interviewing with Supervisor.

Target Date(s): 03-21-94

Date Completed:

Objective: To work with team members to gain a team-wide understanding of the responsibilities and restrictions of the team interview process.

Indicator: Oral team report indicating team's understanding of process of team interview.

Target Date(s): 04-11-94

Date Completed:

FOCUS AREA #2: Key Result Area 1 - Work with Individuals

GOAL: To gain an understanding of effective intervention with difficult youth who are underserved by the team.

Objective: To personally identify the child most difficult to serve therapeutically.

Indicator: Development of a composite of the qualities which are most difficult to respond to therapeutically.

Target Date(s): 03-21-94

Date Completed:

Objective: To utilize the perceptions of team members to enlarge our understanding of this underserved child.

Indicator: Composite of the difficult child including personal composite and team feedback.

Target Date(s): 04-11-94

Date Completed:

Objective: To work with team members to identify the child most difficult for the team to serve therapeutically.

Indicator: Team composite of the difficult-to-serve child.

Target Date(s): 05-01-94

Date Completed:

Objective: To work with team members to develop a plan for overcoming deficit area of therapeutic functioning.

Indicator: Action plan for enlarging team's range of effective therapeutic intervention.

Target Date(s): 06-01-94

Date Completed:

FOCUS AREA #3: Key Result Area #3 - Implementation of Program

GOAL: To increase skill in promoting youth's discovery of intrinsic value of self, individual competence/skills, and their ability to give to others.

Objective: To identify current skills utilized to manage problematic behavior through study of the 17 Steps of Intervention ("Managing Immediate Behaviors" by Brendtro and Ness).

Indicator: List of steps in current use skillfully

Target Date(s): 04-15-94

Date Completed:

Objective: To identify three intervention techniques in the 17 Steps of Intervention ("Managing Immediate Behaviors" by Brendtro and Ness) which are not current areas of skill.

Indicator: List of three skills not in current use skillfully.

Target Date(s): 04-15-94

Date Completed:

Objective: To practice use of three additional intervention techniques in the 17 Steps of Intervention ("Managing Immediate Behaviors" by Brendtro and Ness) in work with assigned cottage group.

Indicator: Incident reports, evaluative feedback, self-report, on-site supervision

Target Date(s): 06-15-94

Date Completed:

FOCUS AREA #4: Key Result Area #C - Business Manager

GOAL: To function fully in the responsibilities of Business Manager for assigned team.

Objective: To develop a clear understanding of the responsibility of the cottage Business Manager.

Indicator: Demonstrated understanding of budget management, purchasing, monitoring, and advocating with team members to integrate program goals and objectives for each child.

Target Date(s): 05-15-94

Objective: To provide the team with monthly budget sheets providing an account of funds allocated to the cottage.

Indicator: Team discussion of use of past and future funds

Target Date(s): 05-15-94

Date Completed:

Objective: To facilitate equal access to cottage funds by all team members through providing checks/cash when appropriate.

Indicator: Anticipation and preparation of checks for team members during shifts on duty and in advance of off-duty time.

Target Date(s):

Date Completed:

_____ _____

Child/Youth Care Worker Supervisor